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ABSTRACT

The article identifies the legislative intent behind KDES/MSSD (Kendall Demonstration Elementary School/Model Secondary School for the Deaf), discusses the failure of traditional educational models to impact upon the field, and points out how the KDES and MSSD hope to become change agents in the field of deaf education by serving as national resources. Rationale is given for the KDES/MSSD selection of particular approaches to educational change; also reasons are given why it is believed these will succeed where others have failed. (Author/SBH)

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KDES-MSSD: DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS OF EXCEPTIONAL PROMISE

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ABSTRACT

Gallaudet College, the world's only liberal arts college for the deaf, administers two special schools on campus--the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD). The article identifies the legislative intent behind KDES/MSSD, discusses the failure of traditional educational models to impact upon the field, and points out how the KDES and MSSD hope to become change agents in the field of deaf education by serving as national resources. Rationale is given for the KDES/MSSD selection of particular approaches to educational change; also reasons are given why it is believed these will succeed where others have failed.

KDES-MSSD: DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS OF EXCEPTIONAL PROMISE

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U. S. Office of Education, has estimated that 35,000,000 persons in the United States--approximately one out of every six persons--has at least one significant mental or physical impairment. The problem of helping handicapped persons to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to live their adult lives independently and with dignity is recognized by the Federal government. Realizing that the public sector must be involved, Congress passed several pieces of legislation in an attempt to alleviate certain aspects of the problem. Possibly the three most noteworthy laws to impact upon handicapped children and adults are:

1. Public Law 93-516, Title III, the "White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals Act" (as part of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1974).
2. Public Law 94-142, which is identified as "Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975."
3. Public Law 93-112, which is identified as the "Rehabilitation Act of 1973."

The Federal legislation having the greatest impact upon the education of handicapped children in the United States is P.L.-142. The regulations of this law include provisions which are intended to: (1) assure that all handicapped children have available to them a free appropriate public education, (2) assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents are protected, (3) assist states and local communities in providing for the education of their handicapped children, and (4) assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate such children.

Though P.L. 94-142 is having a significant influence of where and how handicapped children are being educated in the United States, primary responsibility for the educational process rests with each state. The Federal government focuses on educational needs that states are unable to satisfy. Related to exceptional children, these include establishment of model programs for low-incidence handicapped groups, support for applied and basic research, and provision of special projects.

Two examples of model programs for low-incidence handicapped groups are: (1) The Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-694), and (2) The Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-587). The MSSD legislation authorized Gallaudet College to establish, construct, equip, and operate a comprehensive secondary school which would serve deaf youth ages 14-19 in a primary service area, regional in nature, including Washington, D.C. and the five surrounding states. Though KDES has been in continuous operation since 1857, prior to 1970 it served primarily as a laboratory school for the Gallaudet College graduate programs and as a service school for the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. The new legislation authorized the Kendall School to be expanded and improved such that it would be a national demonstration school with purposes and goals similar to that of the MSSD.

KDES/MSSD Legislative Intent

Though there is a significant difference in orientation and focus between the two schools, the title designation of "demonstration" vs. "model" is viewed as a word choice variation only. The law which authorizes the establishment and operation of the MSSD states that it is "...to provide an exemplary secondary school program to stimulate the development of similar excellent programs throughout the Nation...." This statement is paraphrased in the

administrative agreement between Gallaudet College and DHEW to read "...to develop offerings of such excellence that they may be copied elsewhere." The law which authorizes KDES reads similarly "...to provide an exemplary educational program to stimulate the development of similar excellent programs throughout the Nation, the directors of Gallaudet College are authorized to maintain and operate Kendall School as a demonstration elementary school for the deaf...."

A review of the legislative history, including testimony surrounding the MSSD and KDES legislation, indicates that a major intent of Congress in developing and passing the legislation was to improve the quality of education of the deaf nationally. The statement "to develop offerings of such excellence that they may be copied elsewhere" taken in isolation suggests a passivity with respect to dissemination which is inconsistent with the implications of the statement "...to stimulate the development of similarly excellent programs throughout the Nation...." A review of educational innovation and diffusion history demonstrates that the act of simply creating excellence may be an insufficient condition to ensure adequate national diffusion. What appears to be required is a deliberate and positive dissemination program carefully planned to attain predetermined dissemination objectives.

From the Federal legislation, three broad process-oriented goal statements appear to stand out as being relevant to both the KDES and MSSD goals.

Goal 1: Develop an excellent/exemplary educational program which meets the needs of the students attending the demonstration schools;

Goal 2: Diffuse the positive results of the KDES/MSSD development efforts for the benefit of students in other schools/ programs for the deaf across the country;

Goal 3: Promote positive educational change in other schools/ programs for the deaf across the country.

A further examination of the testimony surrounding the MSSD and KDES legislation reveals a number of basic assumptions. These assumptions include the following:

1. The primary justification for the Federal support of the MSSD and KDES is their potential for stimulating positive change in the process of educating deaf students on a national basis;
2. The MSSD and KDES have a responsibility to develop programs that are applicable to all types of educational settings--day classes, integrated programs, day schools, and residential schools for the deaf;
3. The MSSD and KDES do not have dissemination missions independent of their mission to provide quality education to their respective students. Programs/products developed for dissemination should be responsive to the needs of their respective student bodies and should derive from programs organized to serve their own students;
4. There are a variety of agencies with a commitment and capability to assist the MSSD and KDES in dissemination of programs/products. Where these capabilities can be used without jeopardy to the accomplishment of the KDES/MSSD missions, and without compromising cost-efficiency standards, such agencies should be used.
5. Successful dissemination involves more than sending things out. It includes the necessity for individuals in the target settings to develop skills in evaluating, installing, and maintaining innovation, and the necessity to establish approaches to support the process of evaluation, adoption, installation, and maintenance carried out on

the local level, as well as creating conditions which would facilitate innovation there.

6. In order to have a positive impact upon the target schools and programs, the demonstration schools must take into consideration the reduced available resources that frequently exist in the field, and the significant variations in facilities, number of deaf students, types of programs, and differences as a result of geographical locations.

Traditional Education Models--A Disappointment

A model is defined as "something that is considered a standard of excellence to be imitated or emulated." The most disappointing aspect of many models, particularly those in the field of education, was not the characteristics of the programs themselves but the unreliability of an assumption upon which most of them rested. That assumption was that if a model program were to be established, and if it demonstrated to the profession and the public a better way to achieve a goal that there would be a serious effort by the field to emulate this program (to try to equal or surpass it); the assumption would continue to contend that this emulation process would thereby launch successive waves of improvement in various aspects of the profession. It was found that model programs were not emulated very much at all, and where they did initiate change, the change resulted from some adaptation or interpolation of the model program in another setting.

Demonstration Schools as Change Agents

The demonstration schools of the Pre-College Programs of Gallaudet College, cognizant of the limited impact of other model or demonstration programs, was challenged to articulate its own definitions of "model" and

"demonstration" programs and to confront the long-standing question of how such programs stimulate positive change in other similar programs. The mere presence of a desirable program, or even an innovative one, apparently had very little impact on programs in general unless a principal or instructional supervisor became interested in the concept and endeavored to adapt it to his or her situation.

It was obvious from the start that the Pre-College Programs would develop programs and materials which were more appropriate for the highly specialized field of education of deaf children and youth than had been developed, and the dissemination of these would constitute an important change factor. They not only would provide teachers with more meaningful programs/materials but these would be a part of an instructional system which would have for the first time more continuity and linkage than ever before. So these programs/materials would be disseminated through a system which involves the latest educational technoogy and this would constitute a very positive impact on educational programs.

As the model concept was re-examined, it was felt that the model or demonstration dimension of the Pre-College Programs should be based upon assumptions about how programs are changed that have not yet been tried. The assumptions are simple and direct--professional staff members are the heart of any instructional program. By definition, professional staff members have been prepared to teach using appropriate methods, curricula, materials and, in the case of deaf children and youth, additional techniques in communication and language development. An important way to introduce change into existing educational programs for the deaf is to provide an opportunity for the professional staff to change. Persons change most in an environment in which they are not

forced to change, but in an environment in which they are participants in the development of new ideas, concepts and materials. In such an environment, not only do professional people understand new methods and materials but they have a feeling of ownership and are much more likely to employ these in their own teaching situations.

These simple assumptions suggest a very different approach to the establishment and operation of demonstration or model programs. Rather than these programs constituting stellar examples of very desirable programs--to be installed in other settings--the model or demonstration program constitutes a resource which is made available to the professional staff so that they can grow and change as individuals and develop important methods and materials which they feel will meet the needs of those children where they teach. The demonstration school, therefore, becomes a change agent inasmuch as it is accessible to persons who become involved in it and to the extent that these persons develop new ways of making a difference in the lives of deaf children. This is the definition of a model or demonstration program which characterizes the Pre-College Programs of Gallaudet College.

Demonstration Schools--A National Resource

The majority of low-incidence handicapped children traditionally have been educated in special education settings. Though there certainly remains justification for a significant number of these children to continue to be educated in special education facilities and/or special schools/programs, recent national legislation will result in a large number being educated in regular school settings with their non-handicapped counterparts. The existence of demonstration or model special education programs can be an invaluable resource to schools responsible for educating handicapped children in mainstreamed situations.

The regular public school--now shouldered with the additional responsibility of providing an appropriate education for a variety of different types of handicapped children--will more and more find itself searching for relevant human and technical/program resources to more meaningfully respond to its new role. In most cases, such schools will have limited funds, and thus will be unable to consider any significant program or curriculum development activities for these special learners.

Model or demonstration schools, on the other hand, such as the KDES and MSSD, have both the responsibility and the resources to conduct educational experimentation and product/curriculum developmental work. Their subsequent dissemination activities can positively impact upon the hundreds of programs across the country that are faced with the new student populations that vary considerably in abilities, and frequently require unique instructional materials and methodologies. The demonstration schools, in addition to developing disseminable products, must be human resource agencies in such areas as diagnosis/assessment (psychological, social, academic, and vocational) in-service training, and continuing education.

Educational Change: KDES/MSSD Approach Considerations

The task of promoting positive educational change is truly complex in a variety of ways. For example, educational change can be viewed as a process by which tangible products are developed, evaluated, modified (until they meet specified criteria), and subsequently diffused to the field. Educational change can also be approached as a process of identifying significant educational problems in a particular setting and designing solution strategies in direct response to those problems. A third approach is one of social interaction between a change agency and practitioners in the field--much like the

extension agent in agriculture. Yet another approach to educational change is through the establishment of communication linkages with important components/agencies of the profession.

The Pre-College Programs of Gallaudet College prefer to employ a synthesis of the above four approaches in an attempt to promote positive educational change. The KDES and MSSD have as their primary goal a "two-way sharing between themselves and other programs for hearing-impaired students for the purposes of (1) communicating educational needs, problems, solutions, and information, and (2) facilitating rational consideration and appropriate utilization of outcomes of valid research and development activities. efficient educational practice, and other knowledge that can be used for the improvement of educating deaf children."

In an attempt to implement its role as a change agent, the Pre-College Programs has initiated an "Affiliated Schools Program (ASP)." The new program was established to provide multi-strategy people-to-people interaction through which one or a group of programs might affiliate with the KDES or MSSD to tackle a problem, share a skill or resource, investigate a common concern, or cooperatively develop educational media or materials, to name a few.

An affiliation might involve a simple exchange of information, a problem-solving workshop, consultation, training, pilot or field testing of materials, a research or evaluation project, or an exchange of personnel. It is the intent of Gallaudet College that the Affiliated Schools Program serve as one important mechanism for ensuring that the positive developmental efforts of the demonstration schools be meaningfully articulated to the field.

In turn, the ASP will serve as a data center for collecting, analyzing, and communicating feedback information from the field to the demonstration schools. In this way, the demonstration schools will be able, in a more definitive way, to respond to the precise needs of the field and thereby benefit the largest number of deaf students.